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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 001116

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TAGS: [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [AF](#)
SUBJECT: NEXT STEPS ON ELECTION SECURITY PLANNING

REF: A. KABUL 2914
[1](#)B. KABUL 3020

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Stacy Nichols, Reason 1.5b and d

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The government's Presidential Advisory Group (PAG), led by National Security Advisor Rassoul and with the participation of Ministers, other Cabinet-level decision-makers, and international representatives, on April 30 approved a concept of operations for election security, resolved four of five key policy questions, and sketched out a way forward on districts where the government is absent. Cooperation between the Independent Election Commission, the Afghan National Police, the Afghan National Army, and ISAF on planning shows marked improvement over the fractious and dilatory process that characterized the run-up to voter registration last fall, and the April 30 PAG outcome reflects this trend. END SUMMARY.

FOUR OUT OF FIVE POLICY QUESTIONS SOLVED

[1](#)2. (SBU) Consistent with the Ministry of Defense's lead in election security planning, Defense Minister Wardak guided the PAG discussion on election security. Wardak began with five policy questions identified by the Joint Election Security Planning Group, a working-level body chaired by MOD's planning section and including representatives from the Interior Ministry (MOI), National Directorate for Security (NDS), the Independent Election Commission (IEC), UNDP's ELECT project, and ISAF. (Details of the JSPG recommendations forwarded via email to SCA/A.)

- Presidential Candidate Security. Wardak and Interior Minister Atmar agreed to endorse the JSPG recommendation that police forces, with support from the NDS, provide residential and close protection to all presidential candidates. (NDS was absent from the PAG.) We will follow up soon with Atmar to ensure he commits his best possible troops to this task.

- International Election Observers. At the suggestion of the EU representative, the PAG agreed to defer a decision on government security for international observers until the EU exploratory mission had completed its report to its Brussels headquarters. The PAG reviewed the projected number of international observers (less than 100) and agreed the task might be manageable for Afghan security forces.

- International Media. With little discussion, the PAG resolved that international media, like other internationals in Afghanistan, are free to employ a licensed personal security contractor if they believe existing police protection does not serve their needs.

- Provincial Candidates. The PAG also quickly agreed with the JSPG recommendation that Afghan forces would provide general security, and would respond to candidates' requests for security at public events. Close personal security will

be candidates' responsibility, and any such measures must comply with the law and MOI regulations.

- Transportation for candidates. The PAG did not endorse, or even discuss, the JSPG recommendation that the government create a fund to subsidize candidates' transportation, to create parity with presidential campaign travel. We will revisit and resolve this issue well before the IEC publishes the final candidate list on June 12.

CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS OK'ED

13. (SBU) Wardak also presented the JSPG concept of operations for PAG approval and received no demurrals. Wardak then opened a brief discussion of "command and control." Noting the key role of the regional and provincial security coordination centers, he underscored that, if election security requires the Afghan National Army to respond to a threat, then command and control passes to the Defense Ministry, consistent with established practice. Otherwise the three-tier model applies - the police at tier 1, the army at tier 2, and ISAF at tier 3. In response to a question from the IEC's Zekria Barakzai, both Wardak and Atmar affirmed that they find this model acceptable. Atmar noted MOD has the lead on election security planning, consistent with an earlier PAG decision, and MOI, MOD, and ISAF are partners at the "strategic and operational" level. By all appearances, Atmar and Wardak had reached a prior consensus to sidestep the rivalry-provoking formula of

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declaring either MOI or MOD the "lead" agency for election security operations.

14. (SBU) In subsequent conversation with Emboff, Barakzai expressed some confusion, with a persistent idea that the PAG had resolved that the MOD has the lead on election security overall. We will work to clarify with the IEC the set-up as decided by the PAG, both through the JSPG and with top election officials directly.

15. (SBU) Wardak, Atmar, and CSTC-A's General Formica agreed to work together on support requirements for Afghan forces deployed outside their usual areas for election security operations - tents and water tankers, in particular. Wardak noted that ISAF will provide transport for an Afghan quick reaction force to those provinces where the army has no permanent presence: Nimroz, Ghor, and Dai Kundi.

TROUBLESOME DISTRICTS PLANNING STRUCTURE PROPOSED

15. (C) After Wardak broached the topic of the 11 districts where the government does not operate, Atmar asked the election security planning team to consider a suitable planning mechanism. Atmar noted he has already asked his staff to look at how to involve local communities -- including communities in the troublesome districts - in security for elections. Atmar emphasized he is anxious to avoid any arrangement whereby community security - whether negotiated guarantees or arbaki militias - would bias voters in any way. Wardak noted that he had initiated discussion with ISAF's General Tucker on whether some, but not all, of the districts might be suitable for military operations. Atmar and Wardak agreed that any military solutions must include government plans for follow-up to ensure that the "cleared" districts are "held" in such a way that voters will turn out on election day.

16. (C) The IEC's Barakzai agreed that the experience of

voter registration proved the benefits of local community support, especially from religious leaders, and noted ongoing IEC efforts to replicate this success. "I fully support Atmar's idea," said Barakzai. Atmar said Khost, Paktya, and Paktika had already offered community security for elections to the MOI. Similar efforts in Helmand, Kandahar and Uruzgan might also prove useful, according to Atmar. UN SRSG Kai Eide endorsed this approach as "the right way to go," while underscoring the need for careful attention to the question of non-interference.

PROGRESS, AND MORE PROGRESS NEEDED

¶7. (C) Both the MOI and the MOD appear to have learned from the early stumbles of voter registration security (REFTELS.) In particular, both the police and army are now committed participants to a detailed and cooperative planning process, in partnership with the IEC and supported with expertise from ISAF and UNDP. The pax between Atmar and Wardak has percolated down to their subordinates and tamed much of the previously debilitating institutional rivalry. Many challenges remain, but prospects for finding solutions are good.
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